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AUTHOR Phillis, Judith A.
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INSTITUTION Florida Univ., Gainesville. Communication Sciences Lab.
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ABSTRACT

Relationships between social development, peer popularity, and pupil justifications of friendship choices were investigated. Subjects were 30 boys and 30 girls, 13 of whom were Negro. The children were enrolled in a laboratory summer school program and ranged in age from 5 to 8 years. During taped interviews, each child was asked: (1) to select the child he would most like to play with, and why, and the child he would next most like to play with, and (2) to select the child he would want to be the leader of his physical education team, and why, and which child he would next select. Correlations were made for a Personal Relations Content scoring category, and for a Personality Index. Results showed that the justifications which children gave for choosing others varied with age, sex, and the activity to be shared. Neither race differences nor differences in length of time of enrollment at the school affected popularity. Two socialization factors, Reflectivity and Socialization, were defined, both of which appear to reflect social sensitivity on the part of popular children. (NH)

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# Factors? in Child Development:

## Peer Relations

Judith A. Phillis
University of Florida
Communication Sciences Laboratory

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The extent to which a child is successful in gaining the acceptance of his peers is a factor with pervasive effects upon his present functioning as well as upon his adjustment in later life. Despite this fact, the preponderance of research in child psychology focuses on the development of cognitive functions. The work of Piaget and others, in the area of moral judgment, recognizes the close relationship between social and cognitive functioning, however rarely are cognitive and social development simultaneously investigated.

Moreno (1934) developed the sociometric techniques typically employed to measure peer acceptance or popularity. Although he suggested that children's reasons for their choices be recorded, few investigators have gathered this information (Mussen, Conger, and Kagan, 1963; Hartup, 1970). Several studies have related peer acceptance to the manner of describing other children (Hartup, 1970). These studies suggest that popular children are more sensitive to the situation and feelings of others and are more mature in their reasoning about other children.

The purpose of the present study was to determine if justifications of friendship choices and popularity with peers provide unique information regarding social development. It was also of interest to determine if measures of social development would be independent of cognitive ones.

### METHOD

Subjects. Sixty children participating in the summer program at the University of Florida laboratory school were employed as subjects. The

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children ranged in age from five to eight years, and were scheduled to enter either first, second, or third grade at the school in the fall of 1970. An equal number of girls and boys participated in the study and 13 of the subjects were black.

Procedure. Data were collected at the school during a taped interview between each individual child and a female graduate student.[1] All children were first introduced to the recording equipment and asked to give their name, their teacher's name, and to count from 1 to 10. In order to further acclimate the children to the situation, they were then asked to explain how to play their favorite game and to give an account of what happened the last time they saw their favorite television program. Previous studies had indicated that nearly all children respond with some animation to one of these two questions.[2] The remainder of the questions provided the raw data for the study and were as follows:

> If you could pick any of the boys and girls in Mrs. _____ room to play with, which one would you pick. Why did you pick ____? If you could pick someone else besides _____, who would you pick? (This will be referred to as the "play with" or PW question in the remainder of the paper.)
>
> If you could pick any of the boys and girls in Mrs. _____ room to be the leader of your PE team -- like swimming or baseball or kickball -- which one would you pick? Why did you pick ____? If you could pick someone else besides _____, who would you pick? (This will be referred to as the PE question in the remainder of the paper.)

## Data Reduction

Popularity Index. This is the score which Northway (1952) calls "social receptiveness." It was obtained by totaling the number of different class members who chose a child for the two activities. Thus the highest possible

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[1] All interviews were conducted by Marlene Sanchez.

[2] The entire interview was developed jointly by the author and Norman N. Markel.

raw score was the class size minus one. (Although a few children chose themselves, this was not added to their scores.) In order to compare the scores of children in different classes, the raw scores were converted to quartiles. Two sets of quartile scores were computed since all first graders were in one classroom and all second and third graders were in another classroom. Scores on the popularity index thus ranged from one to four, with four reflecting the highest score.

Personal Relations Content. These scores were obtained from a content analysis of the reasons the children gave for the choices they made. A list of the reasons given by all children for both choices was compiled, and these were grouped into five ordinal content categories by two judges. Few disagreements occurred and these were resolved through discussion between the judges. Responses which showed no ability to justify the choice were placed in category one; those in which mutual affect was explicitly expressed were placed in category five. The category hierarchy was based jointly on the criteria of expression of affect and sensitivity to others and the wording of category definitions was modeled after that employed by Gottschalk and Gleser (1969). A zero category was also employed for instances in which the child made no choice or chose himself. The six categories employed were as follows (a complete listing of responses coded within each category is included in the appendix):

0 = The child makes no choice or choses himself.

1 = The child can give no reason for his choice.
EXAMPLE: I don't know

2 = Mention is made of chance associations or the chosen child is described without explicit admiration.
EXAMPLE: She comes to school with me; he has a lot of games.

3 = Praise or admiration is explicit, but less warmth or mutuality is expressed than for category 4.
EXAMPLE: He is smart.

4 = Unilateral affect or the capacity to take the view of the other is expressed.
EXAMPLE: I love him; she wants to be captain.

5 = Mutuality of affect is explicit.
EXAMPLE: We like each other.

When more than one reason was given for a choice, the response was assigned the score of the highest content category reached.

## RESULTS

Correlations were computed between the PW and PE personal relations content scores and the index of popularity. The only significant correlation obtained was between the two content scores ($r$ = .385; $df$ = 58; $p$ = < .01). Since this correlation accounted for little of the variance, PW and PE personal relations content were employed independently in subsequent analyses.

Fifteen one-way analyses of variance were conducted in order to determine the effects of chronological age, grade in school, duration of enrollment in the school, race, and sex on popularity, PW personal relations content, and PE personal relations content.

PW personal relations content was significantly affected by age ($F$ = 3.70; $df$ = 3/56; $p$ < .05), while the effect of age on PE personal relations content did not quite reach significance at the .05 level ($F$ = 2.72; $df$ = 3/56). Just the reverse pattern was obtained when grade in school was employed as the independent variable. PW personal relations content was not affected by grade placement ($F$ = 2.52; $df$ = 2/59), while grade placement did significantly affect PE personal relations content ($F$ = 3.26; $df$ = 2/59; $p$ < .05).

Subsequent $t$-tests indicated that the eight-year olds obtained significantly higher PW personal relations content scores than did the children between five and seven years of age ($df$ = 56; 5-8: $t$ = -2.84; $p$ < .01; 6-8: $t$ = -2.47; $p$ < .02; 7-8: $t$ = -2.72; $p$ < .01), and that the second graders obtained significantly lower PE personal relations content scores than either the first

or third graders ($df$ = 57; 1-2: $t$ = 2.11; $p < .05$; 2-3: $t$ = -2.37; $p < .02$).

Girls obtained significantly higher PW personal relations content scores than boys ($F$ = 4.64; $df$ = 1/58; $p < .05$), but males and females did not differ significantly with respect to PE personal relations content. Neither content nor popularity changed significantly as a function of race or previous enrollment in the school; popularity was not significantly affected by any of the demographic variables.

As has been previously stated, all variables included in the investigation were factor analyzed. Both PW and PE personal relations scores were strongly loaded on the factor labeled "Socialization I" (PW: -.66; PE: -.76). The index of popularity was strongly loaded on the second socialization factor (.71). "Reflectivity" was the third factor which involved the measures employed in the present study. PW personal relations content loaded moderately on this factor (.50).

## DISCUSSION

The results show that the justifications which children give for choosing others vary with age, sex, and the activity which is to be shared. When the activity was relatively undefined ("Who would you pick to play with?"), older children and females justified their choices with more affect and more frequently indicated an understanding of the viewpoint of the one chosen. When the activity implied group leadership ("Who would you pick to be captain of your PE team?"), males and females responded similarly but the second graders indicated less mutuality of affect in their responses than either the first or the third graders. It seems likely that this pattern is attributable to the fact that the second graders shared a classroom with the third graders. The second graders might therefore have chosen third graders for PE captain simply because they were older and not for any specific reasons beyond this fact.

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An interesting finding was that neither race differences nor differences in duration of enrollment at the school affected popularity. A number of earlier studies (Hartup, 1970; Sells and Roff, 1967) suggest that black children would obtain lower popularity scores, especially within a group in which the blacks are a minority. Similarily one would expect that newer group members would be chosen less frequently by others. This is particularly true in view of the fact that previous studies with this age group have found it desirable to employ pictures to aid the recall of children even when the children were well acquainted (Mussen, Conger, and Kagan, 1963). It is possible that the small size of the sample ($\underline{N}$ = 60) is responsible for these results. However, it is at least tenable that the results reflect the successful integration of new and minority group children.

The failure to obtain significant correlation between personal relations content and popularity appears to be inconsistent with the findings of several studies reported by Hartup (1970). He concludes that popular children are more sensitive to the feelings of others. As noted previously, however, there were differences between the present study and previous investigations in the manner of estimating popularity and sensitivity to others. In the present study, for example, the children were not asked to describe all others, rather through describing children whom they chose, they were asked to justify their choices. This procedure appears to require a logical, thoughtful response and thus might be expected to reflect cognitive aspects of social functioning. The popularity index, although similar to that employed in earlier studies, depends only upon the number of different children who are attracted to a child. Thus popularity, as defined in the present study, can be viewed as measuring skill in appealing to a large number of people. The evidence, therefore, is consistent with the interpretation that popularity status and personal relations content level are dependent upon different types of social experience. Popu-

larity status may be affected by the amount of practice which the child has had in dealing with a variety of different people. Personal relations content may be affected by the opportunities which the child has had to deal intensively and thoughtfully with people.

The results of the factor analysis support the contention that measures of adjustment to peers contribute substantially to an understanding of the child's total functioning. The contribution of PW personal relations content to the "Reflectivity" factor was discussed in the preceding paper.[3] Briefly, this factor appears to reflect the tendency to be cautious and thoughtful, rather than impulsive, in a variety of situations. Both PW and PE personal relations content had strong, negative loadings on "Socialization I" (PW = -.66; PE = -.76). Class inclusion, a measure dependent primarily upon logical skills, loaded moderately on this factor (.46). This suggests that "Socialization I" be interpreted as measuring reasoning style in the social realm. The popularity index (.71), a measure of impulsivity (-.44), and the measure of moral judgment (.53) were among the variables with loadings on the second socialization factor. This pattern suggests that "Socialization II" be interpreted as a global measure of sophistication and skills in the social area. Such an interpretation is highly similar to Hartup's (1970) conclusion that "popularity seems to be linked with the effective internalization of social norms." The fact that a separate "Conformity" factor was obtained in the present investigation is in agreement with Hartup's further observation that

[illegible] that the popular child is overly conforming or com-

[illegible]

In conclusion, both popularity status and the content of justifications

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[3]This paper was presented by Jean B. Sheppard at the same symposium.

of friendship choices provide unique information about the social development of children. These variables contributed to the definition of two socialization factors, both of which appear to reflect social sensitivity. It might be hypothesized that popularity status reflects the ability to act upon perceptions of social events, while the content measures reflect the ability to conceptualize these events.

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# APPENDIX

## Personal Relations Content Categories

0 = The child makes no choice or chooses himself.

1 = The child can give no reason for his choice.
EXAMPLES: I don't know; Because.

2 = Mention is made of chance associations or the chosen child is described without explicit admiration.
EXAMPLES: He/she comes to school with me.; he/she has long hair; I used to carpool with him/her; he/she looks like a captain; he/she was in kindergarten with me; he/she see-sawed with me; he/she has the same name as my mommy/daddy; he/she is the only friend I have; he/she was in my class last year; I play with him/her; he/she is president of the club I'm in; he/she is my brother/sister; he/she picked me up at quarter to eight; he/she hasn't been here long;his/her dad is a coach; my mom/dad knows him/her; we know each other best; he/she has a lot of games.

3 = Praise or admiration is explicit, but less warmth or mutuality is expressed than for category 4.
EXAMPLES: He/she is nice; he/she is smart; he/she is strong; he/she knows a lot of games; he/she knows more than other people; he/she is sweet; he/she is not bad - minds the teacher; he/she is my friend; he/she has pretty clothes; he/she is one of my best friends; he/she is good in physics; he/she would make a good captain; he/she has pretty hair; he/she is fun to play with; he/she can run fast; he/she is a good thrower; he/she is the best guy/girl; he/she swims good; he/she knows everything; he/she can hit; he/she knows how to play; he/she is good at sports; he/she is bigger than I am.

4 = Unilateral affect or the capacity to take the view of the other is expressed.
EXAMPLES: I like him/her; he/she is my best friend;he/she is my boy/girl friend; I love him/her; I like him/her better than others; he/she wants to be captain; he/she thinks I'm pretty; he/she likes me.

5 = Mutuality of affect is explicit.
EXAMPLES: We like each other.